For immediate release

One Health Approach: Safeguarding Communities Across Borders in the Horn of Africa

May 22, 2024, (Nairobi, Kenya): A high-level ministerial event was convened today to address health security in the Horn of Africa through the implementation of a One Health approach. Organised by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in collaboration with Chatham House, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and the World Health Organization regional offices for Africa (WHO AFRO) and the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO EMRO), the event brought together key stakeholders, including focal ministers and their representatives from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, as well as international organisations and development partners. The aim of the initiative is to discuss and explore collaborative strategies for improving health, prosperity, and well-being in the region.

The Horn of Africa confronts substantial public health concerns, which are compounded by factors such as poor healthcare infrastructure and recurring disease outbreaks, as well as the impact of climate change on human, animal, and environmental health. These challenges are exacerbated by socioeconomic inequality and frequent cross-border vulnerabilities, necessitating a comprehensive and coordinated response.

More than *30 million* people in the region are at risk due to the convergence of health crises, including pandemics and antimicrobial resistance.

To address these pressing issues, the One Health approach emphasises the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. By fostering cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation, the initiative aims to create resilient cross-border health systems capable of preventing, detecting, and responding to health threats.

Health security in the Horn of Africa is a multifaceted challenge that transcends national borders," said Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, IGAD Executive Secretary. "By adopting a One Health approach, we can better protect our communities from health threats and enhance overall well-being, addressing the risks at the interface within the context of scarce resources in the IGAD region."

The event highlighted the critical need for integrated health strategies that incorporate public health, animal, and environmental perspectives. Participants underscored the importance of cross-border collaboration and coordination, data sharing, joint research, and capacity building to strengthen health systems and improve health outcomes across the region.

"The One Health Approach, as set out in the agreement, will result in comprehensive feasibility studies and the implementation of targeted health projects in key borderland areas. This will improve disease surveillance, enhance health service delivery, and promote community engagement in health promotion activities." Dr. Olaa Mohamed-Ahmed, Technical Lead from the UK Health Security Agency

The One Health Approach will include comprehensive feasibility studies, followed by the implementation of targeted health projects in key borderland areas. These projects aim to improve disease surveillance, enhance health service delivery, and promote community engagement in health promotion activities.

The initiative will also focus on strengthening health infrastructure, training healthcare workers, and establishing sustainable financing mechanisms to support health security efforts. By leveraging the expertise and resources of diverse partners, the One Health approach seeks to create a healthier, more prosperous Horn of Africa.

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